

The President's Radio Address

May 7, 2005

Good morning. On Sunday and Monday, I will attend ceremonies in the Netherlands and Russia to commemorate the 60th anniversary of V-E Day.

These events will celebrate a great triumph of good over evil. We will never forget the acts of courage that made possible the liberation of a continent or the heroes who fought in the cause of freedom. And we honor the brave Americans and Allied troops who humbled tyrants, defended the innocent, and liberated the oppressed. By their courage and sacrifice, they showed the world that there is no power like the power of freedom and no soldier as strong as a soldier who fights for that freedom.

The defeat of Nazi Germany brought an end to the armed conflict in Europe. Unfortunately, for millions of people on that continent, tyranny remained in a different uniform. In Latvia, where I'm also visiting on this trip, free people were taken captive by another totalitarian empire. Germany was split into free and unfree halves. And countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were cut off from liberty by an Iron Curtain. The people of these countries survived the cold war through great courage, and then they took history into their own hands and reclaimed their freedom.

The result is, the continent of Europe, wounded by decades of conflict and oppression, is today whole, free, and at peace for the first time in its history. The wave of democracy that swept Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 has now swept to nations like Georgia and Ukraine. And the victory for freedom represented by V-E Day has become a reality for millions of people.

On my trip, I will visit Freedom Square in Tbilisi, Georgia, to applaud the people there for the Rose Revolution that advanced democracy in their land. Georgia has survived oppression, fought for liberty, and taken its place among free nations. America is proud to call Georgia our partner in freedom, and we will help the people of that country enhance prosperity, improve security, and spread liberty at home and abroad.

The new democracies of Europe still have much work to do. Free elections are a significant achievement, yet they are only part of a fully functioning democracy. Democratic governments must be committed to providing full and equal rights for minorities, resolving conflicts peacefully, encouraging a vibrant political opposition, and ensuring the rule of law. As the nations of Central and Eastern Europe work to build up the institutions necessary for a free society, America will stand by their side.

Today, these nations are standing with us as we defend liberty abroad. Freedom has no better friends than those with a fresh memory of tyranny. That is why countries like Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Georgia have been partners in our coalition in Iraq and Afghanistan. We're grateful for their contributions and especially for the example they are setting for other aspiring democracies.

America and these new democracies are bound together by history, by the universal rights we have defended together, and by our deepest convictions. All of us understand that the advance of freedom is the concentrated work of generations, from the brave Americans who fought against Nazi Germany 60 years ago to those who struggle for liberty today. And by working together, we will ensure that the promise of liberty and democracy won on V-E Day will one day reach every person and every nation in the 21st century.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:55 p.m. e.d.t. on May 5 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. e.d.t. on May 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 6 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. Due to the 7-hour time difference, the radio address was broadcast after the President's news conference and before his remarks in Riga. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in Riga

May 7, 2005

Sveiki Draugi. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the warm welcome. Madam